Diary

1918.

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Saturday, July 27th 1918.

Hogarth House
Richmond.

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Sat. July 27th.

As usual, this diary has skipped a day or two. But first one must pause to say that here a new volume starts, the third, & therefore there is every appearance of a long, though intermittent life. If it survives the summer, when the evenings are unfavourable to writing, it should flourish in the winter. Perhaps the lack of coal may kill it. We may have to live entirely at the 17 Club. But to look ahead is disastrous, considering how much has still to be recorded of time past. On Wednesday, I had one of my field days. To London, first to meet James at the Club. He was to tell ~~my~~ me about Rupert for my article. His first words however were, "Have you heard of Ka's engagement?" "No, to Hilton?" I asked. "To Arnold Forster." This annoyed me considerably. I am glad that she should marry, though she bade fair to be a marked spinster, but marriage with W. A. F. will be merely a decorous & sympathetic alliance, making her more of a servant of the State than ever. Then, as James had a medical examination, we couldn't say much about Rupert, save that he was jealous, moody, ill-balanced, all of which I knew, but can hardly say in writing. Fredegond appeared next; I took her half way to Charing Cross. She had been having confidences from Alix, & was in the flood of affection for her. These emotions are too much in the Fisher spirit for my comfort. Her poems are soon coming out. Then, having spread my rumour about Ka, which only comes

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through Bob; through a letter from A.F. & thus may not
be true, & I hope it isnt, I went up to Gordon Sqre: when
the vans were taking the furniture, Nessa in & out of the
room all the time; & of course Clive & Mary appeared,
& then everything goes over the same little rapids.
We all dined at the Mont Blanc. Clive has never
forgiven me — for what? I see that he is carefully
following a plan in his relations with me — &
resents any attempt to distract him from it. His
personal remarks always seem to be founded on
some reserve of grievance. which he has decided
not to state openly.

"You've wrecked one of my best friendships" he
remarked; "by your habit of describing facts from
your own standpoint —

"What you call God's Truth" said Nessa.

"One couldn't have an intimacy with you &
anyone else at the same time — You
describe people as I paint pots."

"You put things in curl, & they come out
afterwards" Mary murmured from the
shadow of her sympathetic silence.
Clive however had bitterness of some sort in
what he said. He meant me to see that somehow
I had ended our old relations — & now all is second
best. It was clear also that he lives in
dread of some alliance between Mary & me
which shall threaten his position with her.
He protested that to show her letters of his would
be unfair, on my part or on Nessa's. She is

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a blank book after our much written, unwritten & scratched cut torn out pages. The situation is complicated & delicate enough. He cant make up his mind to cut adrift from me altogether. But he paid for my dinner, & we wound up good temperedly. The rain pelted down, & I rushed for my train. I wish I had the patience to write down the more intelligent parts of our talk: criticism of books & life, & not of people & feelings. But I become too critical of badly written criticism, & write so hurriedly that it it would certainly be bad.

On Thursday we had a day off; in which we glued some more copies of Prelude; I think only one more order has come in. People complain that though clever & all that, the story isnt complete.

On Friday, 26th L: went on his round of League of Nations, & Club. I to Omega for Rogers new paper, to the Golden Sqre for pictures, & then, laden intolerably, to the Club for tea. By rights of importance I should remark that today L. was asked to stand for Parliament. I havent yet turned my mind that way. A natural disposition to think Parliament ridiculous routs serious thought. But perhaps it is nt so ridiculous as speeches make one suppose. Journalists were given tea at the Club. I went upstairs, hid behind a door, & saw Mrs Hamilton for the first time, or rather heard her, holding forth like a jolly club man, for I didnt dare look.

James to dinner. He promises to send us Ruperts letters to typewrite at Asheham; but some queer Strachey intrigue is at work in the matter.

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Monday July 29th.

I'm paralysed by the task of describing a week end at Garsington. I suppose we spoke some million words between us; listened to a great many more, chiefly from the mouth of Miss Hamilton, who strains at her collar like a spaniel dog, & has indeed the large hazel staring eyes of one of them. There was Gertler; Shearman & Dallas for tea; Brett, Ottoline, 3 Children & Philip. The string which united everything from first to last was Philip's attack upon Murry in the Nation for his review of Sassoon. He was half proud of himself & half uncomfortable; at any rate, I was taxed with being on Murry's side before 10 minutes was out; & then to prove his case ~~Murry~~ Philip read Murry's article, his letter, his letter to Murry, three times over, so I thought, emphasising his points, & lifting his fingers to make us attend. And there was Sassoon's letter of gratitude too. I think Ott. was a little bored. Happily the weather was fine, the food good, & we floated about happily enough, & without serious boredom, which is more than one can ask of a week end. In fact, for some reason I was rather well content. My bed was like layer upon layer of the most springy turf; & then the garden is almost melodramatically perfect, with its grey oblong pool, & pink farm buildings, its soft whitish grey stone, & enormous smooth dense green yew hedges. Down these paths we wandered; once or twice with Ott: once with Miss Hamilton. She is a working brain worker. Hasn't a penny of her

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her own; & has the anxious, hard working brain of a professional,
earning her living all the time. I'm not sure though that
she didn't compare very well with Ott. Some time
after tea we three meandered off "to the woods!"
But we never got there of course. Ott: sat upon a
gate very soon & discussed the character of Lady Margaret
Sackville; & as usual Ott. deplored & marvelled at the
very characteristics which, one would have said she
knew at first hand. However, her drift is
always almost bewilderingly meanderings; &
I believe she often doesn't know her own motives
for taking a special line. The difficulty is
that ~~a their~~ anyone listening perceives some
motive unconfessed; & this gives her talk rather a
distracting wearying effect. Halfway up a hill
in the sun, she stopped, leant on her parasol & began a
looked vaguely across the landscape, &
discourse upon love. Some wind seems to blow
half her words away — another reason for finding
her difficult to listen to — "Isn't it sad that no one really falls in
love nowadays? Its the rarest, rarest thing —
I mean they dont see each other ideally.
They dont feel that every word is something too
wonderful just because the other has spoken it.
Bertie does of course — but then his choice is
so often unfortunate."
Here, chauffeur in order to get us home.!

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said that love meant a great many different things: & that to confine it to romantic love was absurd. I also maintained that one could love groups of people, & landscapes. Unluckily this remark led Olt: to lean on her parasol in a mood, & look longingly at a wheatfield.

"Yes. I love that — just for itself — the curve of that wheatfield seems to me as divine as any human being. I've always been like that ever since I can remember. I love literature too —

"I love quite absurd things — the I.L.P. for instance," said Mrs. Hamilton.

At last we got moving again, & we asked the poor old ninny why, with this passion for literature, she didn't write.

"Ah, but I've no time — never any time. Besides, I have such wretched health — But the pleasure of creation, Virginia, must transcend all others."

I said it certainly did; though I think the remark ought to have been made to include Mrs. Hamilton too. We trailed back through the village, where all the peasants were lounging in the road, with their pipes & their dogs & their babies. The most affable, & I'm afraid, obsequious greetings were exchanged; the dazzling appearance of Olt: & her pearls

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seeming to strike the agricultural labourer neither as wrong nor ridiculous, but as part of the aristocratic show that he'd paid for. No one laughed. Old ladies in black were eager to stop & talk about the hot weather. They seemed all a little excited & very anxious to please. "Very nice people, aren't they?" she said when we came in; & I daresay nothing for the next 300 years will make them otherwise. I was taken to Gertler's studio & shown his solid unrelenting teapot (to use Brett's word). He is a resolute young man, & if good pictures can be made by willing them to be good, he may do wonders. No base motive could have its way with him: & for this reason I haven't great faith in him. It's too moral & intellectual an affair; or perhaps the natural gift is not abundant enough to cover his conscience & will power. He says straight out what he thinks. Sits very upright; everything tight curled, tense, muscular about him; his art an agony often, as he told me. But at last he understands that he wishes to paint form in the brightest colours. Form obsesses him. He sees a lamp as an imminent dominant overwhelming mass of matter. Ever since he was a child the solidity & the shapes of objects have tortured him. I advised him, for art's sake, to keep sane; to grasp, & not exaggerate; & put sheets of glass between him & his matter. This, he said, is now his private wish. But he can think pianola music equal to hand made, since it shows the form, & the touch & the expression are nothing.

12. Vict. via E. Grimstead
2 - 29.
County Garage
a Slaughter.

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Wednesday July 31st.

Arrived at Asheham. I sit as often the open air – the drawing room providing only a shell of shade in the intense heat. The air dances over the field; & the smoke of the farm on the meadows mixes with the haze. The garden is overgrown, & the flowers crushed out. However, at this moment L: is cutting us beans for dinner. We spent yesterday doing jobs in London. I saw a dead horse on the pavement – a literal case of what politicians call dying in harness, & rather pathetic to me – to die in Oxford Street one hot afternoon, & to have been only a van horse; & by the time I passed back again he was removed. This shows what my business was. Studies. the Club. I loitered past jewellers windows looking for a stone to replace my sapphire lost in the train going to Garsington. Pale cracked emeralds of doubtful value tempt me greatly. Lytton & Alix at the Club – this last scene of that familiar drama. Lytton was on his way to catch a train. Alix, I suppose, never catches them. Terrible though it is to think of, she is sitting in the 17 Club at this moment – a kind of Fate surveying the passage of moral generations. Lytton had lunch with Lord D'Abernon, together with Lord Ribblesdale & a vulgar appreciative little ~~Actor~~ manager, who asked to read his Chinese play & gave hopes of producing it. Lytton affects to think poorly of it. I've forgotten what I think. I complimented him on the change in Carrington – he has improved her. "Ah, but the future is very dark – I must be free – I shall want to go off" I suggested that she might follow suit, which did not perhaps quite please him. In the street we passed Olivier & the flashing Ivey;

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& were then stopped by Kot: who wanted us to come & meet D. H. Lawrence — or perhaps to ask him here. Kots: blood shot eyes, & general sordidity struck us, in the middle of St James Square. He is a mysterious figure not only in his occupations but in his desire to be a friend of ours, though he seems without many friends. Anyhow, he was the last person we saw in London, since Mr Cox of the London Library doesn't count.

Today the servants were off by a 7 o'clock train; & we came by Clapham, & meant to go by East Grinstead, but found places in the Lewes train after all, & got to Glynde about 2.30 — not a bad journey. Everyone congratulated themselves on finding room at all, after the rumours about crowds that have been put about. In my carriage we were "a family party", according to the extremely capable, friendly, dogmatic Jew passenger man who took us in charge. There are queer meetings; so impressed on one at the time; then so rubbed out. Already I've half forgotten the soldier with the nickel knee plate & the metal arch to his foot, though he talked at the top of his voice, & boasted, & made me hate him; & I have forgotten the women with children, who drank a few drops of whiskey, & how we were all offered drinks of tea, & bites of sandwiches — & were helpful & kindly, & on our best manly & womanly behaviour. We ate our lunch under some trees coming from Glynde.

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Sat: Aug. 3rd

There's nothing but rubbish news to record, since as we expected the Murrys have put us off. Katherine writes that she's ill. I cant help guessing that she may be rather hopelessly ill. Anyhow its out of the question that she should come here. The weather hasn't held good. Yesterday was as wet a day as England often produces. Almost always the afternoon is dry in England; & so it was more or less. We went mushrooming in the evening. & got a handkerchief full. So one of our great excitements has begun again. One ripe blackberry was found at the top. As I lay in the grass a hare loped past me. Perhaps we're rather pleased to be alone after all.

~~Friday Aug~~. Better weather today, though a black sky is about the ugliest thing in nature. L. to Lewes He went to fetch a parcel from the New Statesman which wasn't there. I round M's walk & ~~down~~ over the top. My record must be solely of beetles & butterflies. A very green brings out the brown heaths in any number. Over Newhaven an airship floated, & the sky being blue for a space the sea was too. It struck me as odd to think of all the blazing blue safely burning behind the clouds; & how a ray on the Earth made a different place yet. I must go & pick 'shrooms, the sun being out.

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Sunday 4th Aug:

While waiting to buy a book in which to record my impressions first of Christina Rossetti, then of Byron, I had better write them here. For one thing I have hardly any money left, having bought Leconte de Lisle, in great quantities. Christina has the great distinction of being a born poet, as she seems to have known very well herself. But if I were bringing a case against God she is one of the first witnesses I should call. It is melancholy reading. First she starved herself of love which meant also life; then of poetry in deference to what she thought her religion demanded. There were two good suitors. The first indeed had his peculiarities. He had a conscience. She could only marry a particular shade of Christian. He could only stay that shade for a few months at a time. Finally he developed Roman Catholicism & was lost. Worse still was the case of Mr Collins — a really delightful scholar — an unworldly recluse — a single minded worshipper of Christina, who could never be brought into the fold at all. On this account she could only visit him affectionately in his lodgings, which she did to the end of her life. Poetry was castrated too. She would set herself to do the psalms into verse; & to make all her poetry subservient to the Christian doctrines. Consequently, as I think, she starved into austere emaciation, a very fine original gift, which only wanted licence to take to itself a far finer form than, shall we say, Mrs Browning's. She wrote very easily; in a spontaneous childlike kind of way one imagines, as is the case generally with a true gift; still undeveloped. She has the natural singing ~~[illegible]~~ power. She thinks too. She has fancy. She could, one is profane enough to guess, have been ribald & witty. And, as a reward for all her sacrifices, she died in terror, uncertain of salvation. I confess though that I have only turned her poetry over, making my way inevitably to the ones I knew already.

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Wednesday 7th Aug.

Asheham diary drains off my meticulous observations of flowers, clouds, beetles & the price of eggs; &, being alone, there is no other event to record. Our tragedy has been the squashing of a caterpillar; our excitement the return of the servants from Lewes last night, laden with all L's war books & the English review for me with Brailsford upon a League of Nations, & Katherine Mansfield on Bliss. I threw down Bliss with the exclamation "She's done for!" Indeed I don't see how much faith in her as woman or writer can survive that sort of story. I shall have to accept the fact, I'm afraid, that her mind is a very thin soil, laid an inch or two deep upon very barren rock. For Bliss is long enough to give her a chance of going deeper. Instead she is content with superficial smartness; & the whole conception is poor, cheap, not the vision, however imperfect, of an interesting mind. She writes badly too. And the effect was as I say, to give me an impression of her callousness & hardness as a human being. I shall read it again; but I don't suppose I shall change. She'll go on doing this sort of thing, perfectly to her & Murry's satisfaction. I'm relieved now that they didn't come. Or is it absurd to read all this criticism of her personally into a story?

Anyhow I was very glad to go on with my Byron. He has at least the male virtues. In fact, I'm amused to find how easily I can imagine the effect he had upon women—especially upon rather stupid or uneducated women, unable to stand up to him. So many too, would wish to reclaim him. Ever since I was a child (as Gertler would say, as if it

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proved him a particularly remarkable person,) I've had the habit of getting full of some biography, & wanting to build up my imaginary figure of the person with every scrap of news I could find about him. During the passion, the name of Cowper or Byron or whoever it might be, seemed to start up in the most unlikely pages. And then, suddenly, the figure becomes distant & merely one of the usual dead. I'm much impressed by the extreme badness of B's poetry – such of it as Moore quotes with almost speechless admiration. Why did they think this Album stuff the finest force of poetry? It reads hardly better than L.E.L: or ~~any other~~ Ella Wheeler Wilcox. And they dissuaded him from doing what he knew he could do which was to write satire. He came home from the East with satires (paradoxes of Horace) in his bag & Childe Harold. He was persuaded that Childe Harold was the best poem ever written. But he never as a young man, believed in his poetry: a proof, in such a confident dogmatic person, that he hadn't the gift. The Wordsworths & Keats believe ~~as~~ in that as much as they believe in anything. In his character, I'm often reminded a little of Rupert Brooke though this is to Rupert's disadvantage. At any rate Byron had superb force; his letters prove it. He had in many ways a very fine nature too; though as no one laughed him out of his affectations, he became more like Horace Cole than one could wish. He could only be laughed at by a woman, & they worshipped instead. ~~he~~ I haven't yet come to Lady Byron, but I suppose, instead of laughing, she mostly disapproved. And so ~~we~~ he became Byronic.

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Friday Aug. 8th

In the absence of human interest, which makes us peaceful & content, one may as well go on with Byron. Having indicated that I am ready, after a century, to fall in love with him, I suppose my judgment of Don Juan may be partial. It is the most readable poem of its length ever written, I suppose; a quality which it owes in part to the springy random haphazard galloping nature of its method. This ~~big~~ method is a discovery by itself. Its what one has looked for in vain—a elastic shape which will hold whatever you choose to put ~~at~~ into it. Thus he could write out his mood as it came to him; he could say whatever came into his head. He wasn't committed to be poetical; & thus escaped his ~~to~~ evil genius of the false romantic & imaginative. When he is serious he is sincere; & he can impinge upon any subject he likes. He writes 16 canto's without once flogging his flanks. He had, evidently, the able witty mind of ~~a~~ what my father Sir Leslie would have called a thoroughly masculine ~~character~~ nature. I maintain that these illicit kind of books are far more interesting than the proper books which respect illusions devoutly all the time. Still, it doesnt seem an easy example to follow; & indeed like all free & easy things, only the skilled & mature ~~to~~ really bring them off successfully. But Byron was full of ideas—~~is~~ a quality that gives his verse a toughness, ~~that~~ & drives me to little excursions over the surrounding ~~to~~ landscape or room in the middle of my reading. And tonight I shall have the pleasure of finishing him—though why, considering that I've enjoyed almost every stanza, this should be a pleasure ~~so~~ I really dont know. But so it

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always is, whether the books a good book or a bad book. Maynard Keynes admitted ~~that~~ in the same way that he always cuts off the advertisements at the end with one hand while he's reading, so as to ~~have no illusions that the books any~~ ~~he's got to read a word more than he must~~. know exactly how much he has to get through.

Everyone so far has failed us: Katherine M; Ka & Will A.F. obliged to work next Sunday; so, in a wild desire to couple Bonwick with some one who will mitigate his tedium, we've wired both to Marjorie Strachey & Mrs Hamilton. Rather wickedly I dwelt to Marjorie upon the fair hair of B: but she has drawn it upon herself by her confession, or rather statement, that she intends to marry.

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Monday. Aug. 12th

(I believe this is near about the anniversary of our wedding day.
6 years ago) Bonwick came; but Marjorie & Mrs
Hamilton only sent telegrams. Being a man of business
he made the most of his holiday, & came toiling up the
hill to find us, where we were picking blackberries.
A straight commonplace rigid kind of man; impervious
to anything at all different from the usual. Going down
the hill he told us that he spent a fifth of his
income on Prisoners of War, in order to justify his
exemption as a C.O. Our talk was almost wholly
about the Nation. It was his only topic. The
poor man has a strong Cockney accent, & a persevering
aspiring selfsatisfied mind, making great play with
his literary connections, & pretending to be the
most important part of "We" when he speaks, as
he always does of the Nation. To tell the truth,
I got my first inkling of the lure of gold through hearing
him talk. He gave out that he deals in hundreds &
thousands. They are Rowntrees hundreds & thousands,
but Mr B: has the easy powerful air of one who
deals in them. "Rowntree asked me if the Nation could
afford it (1000 a year) & I said yes. So he did it —
yes. We pay our writers increased rates now.
Hobson chanced to say that he had never made so
little by the Nation, so I told Rowntree the fees ought
to be raised!" I imagine him sitting at a desk in an
ante room & opening the door for people who want to
see Massingham. He told us that Mrs Phillimore
has been offered £500 for a book of her religious sketches.
He told us lots of gossip. how Edward Garnett

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was turned out; & how they get scores of letters against Rogers articles; a madman wrote to them "I am the son of God" But I was more impressed by his commercial bearing than by his anecdotes. He told them a little as if he were superior to all these literary people — But I confess that the mosquitoes are biting my toes, & a moth is dropping ~~pea~~ perpetually from the lamp, so that I can't remember all the things I meant to say about Mr Bonwick. Leonard is staying with him at "my place" near Croydon tonight & goes tomorrow to York to see Rowntree. L. declares that the profound psychologist would find B. chiefly remarkable for a complete lack of humour.

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Friday, 16th Aug.

My visit to Charleston & L's to York are both partly responsible for this skip. But I've skipped too much to give a very full account of one or of the other. Bonwicks villa precisely expresses Bonwick, & a stuffy smell thrown in; windows curtained in thick white; pictures of Niagara. L. spent 17 hours in travelling to York & back; & the result, still to ~~be~~ await another meeting of Trustees, though Bonwick is sure they mean to agree. The Labour people are to be dropped. My visit to Charleston was spent mostly in sitting in the drawing & talking to N. while she made herself a small brown coat. Duncan wandered in & out; sometimes digging a ~~flow~~ vegetable bed, sometimes painting a watercolour of bedroom china, pinned to a door. In the evening there was the trumpeter Bunny, inclined to be surly; & N. inclined to take him up sharply. What did we discuss? There was Ka's engagement, concerning which Duncan had a good deal to say; one of his statements being that A-F is 45 & always has been. Another that he lent to certain affections & practised them in an Italian villa. I made out a description of Garsington. The hunger of poor Ottoline for some recognition in Sussex is proved by her ~~asking~~ offering herself for any day in the summer after July 8th. She was abruptly told that none suited — which explains her eagerness to insert her foot here. Then we discussed the A. S's: he a dead weight, & she a live one, according to N: who warns me we shall repent

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of asking them here — this in front of Duncan too, who said nothing to contradict. So our relationships change, imperceptibly change. When N. & I were alone, I suppose we discussed the two parrokeets & money, which is not any longer such a distant, speculative sort of commodity as it used to be — at least to her. We discussed the children too; the sort of talk that goes on when one knows all the facts, but wishes to ascertain how they've changed position — what for instance is Lytton's view of Mrs Asquith; & hers of him; & Maynard of them both. Gertler's notions of painting: & his views of her painting; Duncan's fame. Bunny's socialism. Bunny thus defining his position: all capitalists are wrong; therefore for him to live upon Vanessa is good, inasmuch as she enjoys money that she has no right to & could not possibly spend her interest better than by maintaining him. This is evolved from a sentimental declaration by him that he ought to spend his life in giving honey to his friends for nothing. His brain must be a tangle of sentiments & half-realised socialism. I bicycled back on Wednesday & found L: & we were very happy, until it came to the fat bacon — when, alas —!

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Monday 19th Aug.

It's possible that we may have solved the problem of having visitors — not to see them. At this moment A. & K. are in the house, as an occasional sound from the drawing room proves. But we only meet at meals; so that it is possible to think of things to say in the intervals. I find that deafness imposes itself upon the mind as well as the voice: it frightens away the quicker shyer deeper thoughts ~~to~~ so that all the talk that reaches a deaf person must be of the same hearty, plain, matter of fact kind. ~~D~~ Try as one will one cant do otherwise. Carrington came for the week end. She is the easiest of visitors as she never stops doing things — pumping, scything, or walking. I suspect part of this is intentional ~~on her~~ activity, lest she should bore; but it has its advantages. After trudging out here, she trudged to Charleston, & only came in at eleven last night, just as we were shutting the windows. Poor lugubrious Bunny escorted her, protesting that ~~as~~ a 10 miles walk was nothing compared to the joy of having some one to talk to. She trudged off again this morning to pack Lyttons box or buy him a hair brush in London — a sturdy figure, dressed in a print dress, made after the pattern of one in a John picture; a thick mop of golden red hair, & a fat decided clever face, with staring bright blue eyes. The whole gives merriness, but decidedly merries what might be vulgarity. She seems to be an artist — seems, I say, for in our circle the current that way is enough to sweep ~~peopl~~ people with no more art in them than Barbara in that direction. Well, I think Carrington cares for it genuinely, partly because of her way of looking at pictures.

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I finished by the way the Electra of Sophocles, which has been dragging on down here, though it's not so fearfully difficult after all. The thing that always impresses me fresh is the superb nature of the story. It seems hardly possible not to make a good play of it. This perhaps is the result of having traditional plots which have been made & improved & freed from superfluities by the polish of innumerable actors & authors & critics, ~~lik~~ till it becomes like a lump of glass worn smooth in the sea. Also, if everyone in the audience knows beforehand what is going to happen, ~~the~~ much finer & subtler touches will tell, & words can be spared. At anyrate my feeling always is that one can't read too carefully, or attach enough ~~weat~~ weight to every line & hint; ~~seeing~~ & that the apparent bareness is only on the surface. There does, however, remain the question of reading the wrong emotions into the text. I am generally humiliated to find how much Jebb is able to see; my only doubt is whether he doesn't see too much — as I think one might do with a bad modern English play if one set to work. Finally, the particular charm of Greek remains as strong & as difficult to account for as ever. One feels the immeasurable difference between the text & the translation with the first words. The heroic woman is much the same in Greece & England. She is of the type of Emily Brontë. Clytaemnestra & Electra are clearly mother & daughter, & therefore should have some sympathy, though perhaps sympathy gone wrong breeds the fiercest hate. ~~Wo~~ E. is the type of woman who upholds the family above everything: the father. She has more veneration for

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tradition than the sons of the house; feels himself born of the ~~man's~~ father's side, & not of the mother. Its strange to notice how, although the conventions are perfectly false & ridiculous, they never appear petty or undignified, as our English conventions are constantly made to do. Electra lived a far more hedged in life than the women of the mid Victorian age, but this has no effect upon her, except in making her harsh & splendid. She could not go out for a walk alone; with us it would be a case of a maid & a hansom cab.

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Saturday Aug. 24th.

I had to look carefully before I wrote Saturday; stranger still one won't know that its Sunday tomorrow, I suppose. If I weren't too lazy I think I should try to describe the country; but then I shouldn't get it right. I shouldn't bring back to my own eyes the look of all those old beautiful very worn carpets which are spread over the lower slopes of the hills; nor should I convey the look of clouded emerald which the downs wear, the semi-transparent look, as the sun & shadows change, & the green becomes now vivid now opaque. However I confess that I think almost equally the task which has accumulated for me 7 days of describing our visitors. They are with us for another week, so I need not try to hit them this very moment. Bridge has broken down the partition between our sitting rooms. L: is playing at this moment, 5.40. binding himself to stop at 6; but it is doubtful if he will. I hesitate a little to write evil of my guests, nor do I think evil—exactly. I refer, in rather crablike fashion, to something coarse material, insensitive about Karin. One would never find much interest in her; though nothing despicable or mean. No: but she's a capable American, who will get all that can be had for the asking; & nothing that can't. I have a theory that if one sense fails another does double work; she eats enormously. She has no concealed vices. Would she be more interesting if

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she had? She is not stupid, or dull; or trivial: on the contrary she is bright capable & stirring: stirring Adrian to read books upon economics, & even stirring him to learn shorthand which according to her is useful in a literary career. She intends him to have a career. At any rate she is going to ask for that too; for certainly Adrian will never ask for anything for himself. Yet (I confess it is "yet" to me) he is happy; gives one the sense of being well provided for, as he provides her with good manners, good looks, & good taste. I feel myself frightfully superior, so refined as to be almost apologetic to Leonard; so full of fine feelings, subtle perceptions, intellectual tastes & the rest that I almost blush to sit here alone, writing or reading Milton. She informs me that ~~my tastes~~. I write my tastes would have much in common with Hope Mirrlees. "with my tastes" indeed! This accounts emphasises our points of difference; outwardly we are all good friends, talkative & in agreement, & not relying on gossip merely to dispatch dinner with. We talk about the Labour party, & politics. She understands anarchism, & government. And in argument, deals with an article manfully — in her way she's a nice honest creature, not so sure of herself when it comes to taste, & knowing it too — though taste has led her, alas, to embroider a pair of shoes which A: obediently wears. I must leave what I have to say about Milton, the German prisoners, life, & other subjects for next time.

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Monday, Aug. 27th

Now I confess that I have half forgotten what I meant to say about the German prisoners; Milton & life. I think it was that? (all I can remember now (Friday, Aug. 30th) is that ~~life~~ the existence of life in another human being is as difficult to realise as a play of Shakespeare when the book is shut. This occurred to me when I saw Adrian talking to the tall German prisoner. By rights they should have been killing each other. The reason why it is easy to kill another person must be that one's imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him — the infinite possibilities of a succession of days which are furled in him, & have already been spent. However, I forget how this was to go on. The prisoner, who looks very lean & hopeless, seemed to like talking; I met him later & he smiled, but the sentry was not there.

Here we are almost at the end of August, & finishing N & K's visit. They go to Charleston tomorrow. As ... in a visit of this kind one wears through different stages. My stages are on the whole nearer to warmth & liking than to irritation; though there is an element of criticism in our relationship. A. fared partly on K's manners, appetite & appearance. What, poor woman, she can't altogether help; still there seems no need to emphasise the natural process by an orange dressing gown, held in by a broad band. Her appetite is frankly a schoolboy's. "What beef!" she exclaimed today. "Don't you feel elated at the sight of good meat?" pleads such as I in my ... add a sort of romance to her life

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get, shall we say, from the post or the newspapers. I can imagine Karin, for instance, thinking with a little thrill that next day is the day for salt beef: as I think perhaps I shall get my book from the Times, or an interesting letter. L: on the other hand, is irritated, & being irritated by superficial disagreeables finds deeper causes for them than I altogether agree with. Our usual method is to begin "Why did Adrian marry her?" Then I say "I can quite understand it — she has energy & so on." Then L. says "I'd a thousand times rather have married Ka. In fact I'd rather have married any one in the whole world. I couldn't sit in the same room with her." Still I do see why Adrian married her. First & foremost she makes him like other people. He has always, I believe, a kind of suspicion that whereas other people are professionals, he remains an amateur. She provides him with household, children, bills, daily life, so that to all appearances he is just like other people. I believe he needs constant reassurance on this point; & takes constant delight in her substantiality. Yes, one wants to be found doing the ordinary things when one's friends call. I too have this feeling to some extent. I suppose indeed that I share many of A's feelings. A feeling comes over me when I am with him that instead of being comfortably obtuse we are crepuscular to each other; & thus, among other things, fearfully shy when we are alone. With other people in the room we get on much better. We had a walk to the post marked by those clogging

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of the wheels, which are so disconcerting: nothing seems possible; then with an odious jerk one jars on again. This was better managed than of old. He lost his diffidence & air of hearing himself talk when he told me about Karin; how deaf she is, - how depressed she gets, & how she thinks that people won't talk loud on purpose, & thus dislikes all Stracheys & others of the low voiced mumbling family. He is very proud of her vitality. I suppose it provides him with a good deal of the stuff of life, which he does not provide for himself.

Yesterday, 22nd, I bicycled to Charleston, lunched, & came home in the evening. It was the first autumn day, warm, softly blue, & plumed with haze. Duncan spent the night before with us. He stumbled along until, by means which he only knows the secret of, he had us all laughing until the tears came. His chief effort was a description of Lady Strachey reading aloud Laurence Housman's The dying ploughboy speaks from the grave — I hear the bells jingling, & my Ilie in my mother's bed. "the finest poem in the language too." Then we discussed the bursting of people's bladders, the National Gallery, incest, perhaps, & other gossip. All sitting in the drawing room, until it grew too dark to see. We have lamps almost at dinner; but not at Nessa. A new plan is Guests. I gossiped with Liz for a cook. Trissie is on foot to supply her with one. She is going — but never again into service. She is one of the transition cases — the servant not yet turned lady, but past servanthood. Karin & A. have gone into Brighton to see a specialist about her ear.

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Monday Sept. 3rd

Pernel came on Saturday; & her coming was to have coincided precisely with the Waterlows going, but there was a hitch here, as the fly refused to take them, & they enjoyed another meal with Karin. I regret to say though that either natures protests or our mute ones have diminished her appetite, so that she was no longer a show piece for a visitor. She announced her intention of being wheeled to Charleston on Adrian's bicycle; which considering her shortness, breadth, & great pillar like legs, produced a comic picture, & so I think Adrian judged it, for he dissuaded her from mounting till they were at the bottom of the drive. I think the best way to sum up the impression of Pernel is to quote our simultaneous exclamation on going to bed on Saturday night "What a relief to talk to a human being!" Part of the relief, of course, is the effect of her good ears; but beyond this she is subtle, finely graded, with fine shades of understanding & perception which are not, after all, entirely a matter of ears. I suppose if Karin were witness in her own behalf she might point to a certain faintness, remoteness, & donnishness in Pernel; she does perhaps survey life through a tinted shade, but her eyes are good ones, & she is too sensible, humorous, & indolent to have taken the shape of a professor, or indeed to believe very heartily in Newnham or education or anything but books & ideas & poetry & so on.

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A more unambitious person does not live; but she has not the dulness & flatness which generally exist ~~together~~ in these self effacing unselfish old maids. I wonder what we talked about? Partly about Hope Mirrlees whom we've asked to write us a story; & Jane & Lady Strachey, & writing novels, & food. Last night, L. read Hardy's poems aloud. ~~We~~ The night before we discussed complexes. Then it turned out that she had been to a lecture upon potato blight. I should never be surprised to find that she knows everything about Turbines or Bees: everything that can be learnt from books that is. She lacks the ambition, perhaps the power, to handle the things themselves. Here Karin again has a plea to be considered. I suppose she has done more things than Pernel. The weather was very windy, but the mushrooms have come again. She was rather unable to see them; & I suspect she mooned rather than looked about her. She always arrives here provided with two shilling books with bright covers one to read coming, the other going. During the week end she always reads one classic & one nonsense biography, such as Lady Jeune. I suppose however that she is in her quiet dreamy way obstinately conscientious & something of a martinet towards herself.

"Nothing would ever induce me to marry" she said, with the utmost conviction. Indeed I should fancy that her bachelor life, with many women friends, & a great many books, & lectures to prepare in French literature suit her

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perfectly.

This is written on the return from our great Brighton treat. Everything succeeded. L: foretold a wet day by the light on our shutters, but on opening them we found a perfect September morning. The sun is thinner but very clear, & the air sparkling, now that we are past August. The colours are being burnished on the trees too. The shadows seem lighter & paler. No one could compare the 3rd of September with the 31st August. A perfect treat must include a visit to the 2nd hand book shops. (I bought the Life of Col. Hutchinson); sweets (we found chocolate unlimited) lunch at Mutton's; the band on the pier; some human grotesques; tea at Booths; Buns at Cowleys; a trail past shops with many temptations to buy, for the most part resisted; a debauch at some stationers; & so home, to find the downs & this house lovelier than ever. All these things we did; & we had too a ~~[illegible]~~ feeling of lightness because of the villages won in France. Queant & Lens are taken, as we learnt from a shop window. Can't one see the curtain lifting, very slightly, & some promise of a world of food & so on beyond? I couldn't help thinking that the sight of an English gentleman walking the stubble after partridges with his sons & his retriever was a foretaste of better days.

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Sunday 8th September

At any rate today I am the wife of an Editor. Leonard got a letter from Bonwick to tell him that he is to get his first number out in January. He wants to know what office accommodation L. will require. It is, I think, a great triumph to have steered through the shoals of Macdonald, Trades Unions, Rowntrees, Bonwicks & all the rest. The idea is very amusing & stimulating too. I like playing with imaginary offices, & thats of note paper & little boys with buttons, & myself walking up the steps to take a cup of tea, & surveying the Strand from the window. Perhaps there'll be a shake down bed in the corner. Then Miss Matthaei in her little stall, & long galley proofs: distinguished foreign visitors; telegrams from distant capitals; general importance & glory; everything a solid improving success; yes, a very nice prospect even on its picturesque side, which I admit is the one most perceptible to me. At the same time we had a letter from Hope offering to let us have Asheham on a yearly tenancy, in case he may ever want the house — but theres no present prospect of this. We feel fairly safe again. Ka, another letter says, is to be married at 11 tomorrow. I cant help reading into her letter a sort of protest as to the merits of Will, & her love for him. Yet even so, I own that when I think of her I see her as a rounder warmer more complete person than she was single. I suppose I had got into the habit of seeing her faithful solitary lonely till the end of time; I like happiness too well to be very fastidious about the husband.

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What has happened this last week — following upon the superb success of Brighton? For one thing the weather has been so tremendously generous, giving us after a veil of morning mist, such an endowment of sun & such clouds of alabaster firmly laid against the blue, that even people like — shall I say Melian Stawell? — must have felt jovial & random & unencumbered. Or are they always bothering with high moralities, had to share the sunshine? I remember lying on the side of a hollow, waiting for L. to come & mushroom, & seeing a red hare loping up the side & thinking suddenly "This is Earth life." I seemed to see how earthy it all was, & I myself an evolved kind of hare; as if a moon visitor saw me. A good life it is, at such moments; but I can't recapture the queer impression I had of its being Earth life seen from the moon. Yesterday poor Bunny came for the night, bringing 6 combs of honey, for which he charges 2/6 each. Also we were robbed at Brighton; 3/- for a mixture of milk & saccarine. Poor old Bunny! He is as if caked with Earth. Stiff as a clod; you can almost see the docks & nettles sprouting from his mind; his sentences creak with rust. He can only lay hands on the simplest words. I suppose his vocabulary is now surpassed by Mrs Altfield & equalled by Fred. However, by dint of kindly treatment we softened him; & I must confess that for 20 hours we did very well. We wanted to know about mushrooms; & upon all funguses he is an authority: indeed he discovered one of the smallest for the first time. Then he could tell us about the agricultural labourers Union,

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which is being half secretly organised even among our Freds & Wills. He has a humanity which is not all theoretical, though he will insist upon breaking his brains over possible Labour parties. He talks to the German prisoners, who are social democrats, only fought because they would be shot for refusing, & consider the whole war a device of the aristocracy. Bunny looks forward to a democratic future. I sacrificed half my morning & sat with him ~~sew~~ hemming handkerchiefs. As an example of his uncouth absurdity which one cant help liking he described to me a scene with Hope Mirrlees in Paris. He was furious — the creature is a most enthusiastic friend — because Laurence's novel was reported burnt. Hope was staying in the same hotel. He burst out to her upon the iniquity of burning books. They had never met before. She was so much of his way of thinking that he exclaimed "You darling!" — ~~[illegible]~~ & offended her — although, as he explained, he was on the far side of the room, & used the word 'darling' in its other sense. I suppose he never had a rich vocabulary. Anyhow Hope hinted that he ought to be in the army. Bunny could see nothing wrong or odd in calling a young woman "You darling!"

"Virginia, he said, intimately, I want to ask you to give me a photograph of — Alix." He had one in mind, which I was forced to give him, to muse over, as I can fancy, by the hour, in his half sentimental simple good hearted way, while he ploughs Mr. Hyt's fields with the motor plough. But I was interested by his story of the attempted rescue of Savarkar, an Indian. Bunny appeared like the manly, serious, romantic hero of a Meredith novel.

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Monday, Sept. 10th.

I spend the first five minutes with this book before me trying to fish two drowned flies out of my ink pot on the tip of my pen. But I begin to see that this is one of those undertakings which are quite impossible—absolutely impossible. Not Darwin or Plato could do it with the tip of my pen. And now the flies are increasing & dissolving: today there are three. At Asheham I naturally bethink me of Darwin & Plato; but in this I am not singular. My intellectual snobbishness was chastened this morning by hearing from Janet that she reads Don Quixote & Paradise Lost, & her sister Lucretius in the evenings. I thought that no one in Sussex was reading Paradise Lost at this moment. Janet holds the characteristic idea that Don Quixote is more humorous than Shakespeare. The coarseness of Sh— I can see would distress her; she would deal with it intellectually. All her generation use their brains too scrupulously upon books, seeking meaning rather than letting themselves run on for pleasure, which is more or less my way, & thus naturally richest & best. Margaret is said to be not so well. I'm inclined to be hardhearted, as I expect to learn to my cost one of these days, about elderly ailments in general & Margaret's in particular. She seems to me to live in an atmosphere where cold feet are more important than bronchitis elsewhere—part of the romance of life, as food is to Karin & reviewing books ~~is~~ to me. And then what an attentive solicitous echo is provided by Lilian & Janet! Margaret dominates,

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& they taking pleasure in unselfishness, lavish sympathy & somehow make out a different scale of health for M. than for the rest of the world — but this is a little fantastic, & rises partly from the thought that I would, if I were kind, write a long affectionate amusing letter to M. I am ~~so~~ deterred from doing this by my ~~dislike~~ prejudice against the patronage of the elderly. I want neither to be patronised, nor to patronise; & I feel that the sort of letter one writes on these occasions is an act of kindness, & so neither to be offered nor received. Inevitably the social worker approaches the non-social worker with a view to getting what they can give & very slightly disparaging the giver, who can be nothing better than a giver of amusement. Boredom is the legitimate kingdom of the philanthropic. They rule in the metropolis.

Though I am not the only person in Sussex who reads Milton, I mean to write down my impressions of Paradise Lost while I am about it. Impressions fairly well describes what the sort of thing left in my mind. I have left many riddles unread. I have slipped on too easily to taste the full flavour. However I see, & agree to some extent in believing, that this full flavour is the reward of highest scholarship. I am struck by the extreme difference between this poem & any other. It lies, I think, in the sublime aloofness & impersonality of the emotions. I have never read Cowper on the Sofa, but I can imagine that the Sofa is a degraded ~~sub~~ substitute for Paradise Lost. The substance of Milton is all made of

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wonderful, beautiful, & masterly descriptions of angels bodies, battles, flights, & dwelling places. He deals in horror & immensity & squalor & sublimity, but never in the passions of the human heart. Has any great poem ever let in so little light upon one's own joys & sorrows? I get no help in judging life; I scarcely feel that Milton lived or knew men & women; except for the peevish personalities about marriage & the woman's duties. He was the first of the masculinists, but his disparagement rises from his own ill luck, & seems even a spiteful ~~return for his~~ last word in his domestic quarrels. But how smooth, strong & elaborate it all is! What poetry! I can conceive that even Shakespeare after this would seem a little troubled, personal, hot & imperfect. I can conceive that this is the essence, of which almost all other poetry is the dilution. The inexpressible fineness of the style, in which shade after shade is perceptible, would alone keep one gazing into, long after the surface business in progress has been despatched. Deep down one catches still further ~~hint~~ combinations, rejections, felicities, & masteries. Moreover, though there is nothing like Lady Macbeth's terror, or Hamlet's cry, no pity or sympathy or intuition, the figures are majestic; in them is summed up much of what men thought of our ~~re~~ place in the universe, of our duty to God, our religion.

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Wed: Sept. 18th:

I have let the first freshness of the Webbs fade from my mirror; but let me bethink me of another metaphor which they imposed upon me, towards the end of Sunday. I was exalted above a waste of almost waveless sea, palish grey, & dented with darker shadows for the small irregularities, the little ripples which represented character & life & love & genius & happiness. But "I" was not exalted; "I" was practically non-existent. This was the result of a talk with Mrs Webb. In truth though they deserve more careful handling. I wonder how I can recapture the curious discomfort of soul which Mrs Webb produces each time I see her again? In the intervals one forgets; in a second it comes over one again. There's something absolutely unadorned & impersonal about her. She makes one feel insignificant, & a little out of key. She represses warmth or personality. She denies a welcome for one's individuality. little what ~~it is~~ one's natural proclivities are; & she irradiates them with her bright electric torch. It was a pouring wet day on Saturday; not a day for geniality. Webb however has some coat to shake; she is as bare as a bone. We sat down to tea, without George Young. They eat quickly & efficiently & leave me with hunks of cake on my hand. After tea we were soon

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disposing our topics, & I began to feel nervous, lest our
cupboards should be bare. Then G. Young appeared,
having like all Youngs, rejoiced in his battle with
distance & wet. Liked the walk, he said. While he
changed Mrs Webb rapidly gave me her reasons for
saying that she had never met a great man, or woman
either. At most she said, they possessed remarkable
single qualities, but looked at as a whole ~~they~~
there was no greatness in them. Shakespeare
she did not appreciate, because a sister, who was a
foolish woman, always quoted him wrong to her as
a child. Goethe might conceivably have been a
great man. Then, this having been dealt with,
down came L. & G. Young & they all pounced
together upon some spot gentlemen floating far out
beyond my ken. I think it was to do with
the General Election & the views of the private
soldiers. Young came provided with facts, but
I rather think these did not stand much
investigation. He is a slow, stiff, kindly man,
with all Hiltons romance, but less than Hiltons
brain: & ~~but~~ following his ideals he has left the
Diplomatic Service, & is now a marine officer
at Portsmouth. After dinner Mrs Webb
plunged from brisk argument to unconcealed
snoring. Then Sidney had his turn. I
thought he spoke a little quick to conceal the snores.

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but you have only to ask him a question & he can go on
informing you till you can hold no more. He sketched
his idea of a supernational authority, & the future of
Bills of Exchange. ~~We~~ The work of Government will be
enormously increased in the future. I asked whether
I should ever have a finger in the pie? "O yes; you
will have some small office no doubt. My wife &
I always say that a Railway Guard is the most
enviable of men. He has authority, & he is
responsible to a government. That should be the
state of each one of us."
"~~Start them~~ And then we discussed L's
plan of a State so contrived that each person has to
do some work. Here there was a long argument
upon the growing distance between men of different
social grades & professions, Goumy affirming it, the Webbs
denying it. I ~~ask~~ asked (in reporting conversations
one's own sayings stand out like lighthouses) one
of my most fruitful questions; viz: how easy is it for a
man to change his social grade? This brought
down a whole shower bath of information, but let us
say that the Webbs shower baths are made of
soda water. They never sink one, or satiate. Webb
told us how many scholarships were won in London
in a given year. & also ~~do~~ reported upon the
educational system of E Sussex, which bad though
it is, is slightly better than that of W. Sussex.
"I myself" he said "came too early to profit by the
~~state~~ secondary education. My parents were

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lower middle class shopkeepers, possessed, like so many of their kind, with a blind determination to educate their sons somehow, but without a ghost of a notion how to set about it. They hit on the plan of sending me & my brother ~~for~~ abroad to France & Germany; & so we learnt French & German at least. I can still read them, though I seldom do." Our talk must have dealt fully with education, for I remember that Mrs Webb woke with a start & delivered herself of a statement upon the German 'wrong turning', & put Young right on some point about the division of character & intellect. He was simple enough to separate them & to prefer what he was quite unable to define: She thrust him through & through with her rapier, but he persisted. Next day, which was said to begin for the W's at 5.30, when they begin tea-drinking in their bedrooms, I had to withdraw in order to do battle with a very obstinate review of Wells 'Joan & Peter'. My ideas were struck stiff by the ~~tram~~ tap of Mrs W's foot, up & down the terrace, & the sound of her rather high, a ~~little~~ rather mocking voice, discoursing to L: while she waited either for W. to come or the rain to stop. They walked on the downs, till lunch. I must now skip a great deal of conversation & let us suppose that Sidney & Beatrice & I are sitting on the road side overlooking Telscombe, smoking cigarettes in bright sunshine, while the silver Queen slowly patrols above Newhaven. ~~All~~ The downs were at their best; & set Mrs W. off

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upon landscape beauty, & recollections of India, which she turns to when lying awake at night, relishing the recollection more than the reality. Sidney, one perceives, has no organ of sight whatever, & pretends to none. Mrs W. has a compartment devoted to ~~[illegible]~~ nature. So briskly narrating their travels & impressions, which were without respect for British rule, we set off home. I saw them from behind, a shabby homely, dowdy ~~figure~~ couple, marching with the uncertain step of strength just beginning to fail, she clutching his arm, & looking much older than he, in her angularity. They were like pictures in French papers of English tourists, only wanting spectacles & Badekers to finish them. Their clothes looked ill dusted, & their eyes ~~set~~ peering in front of them. My few private words came, as I knew they would come, when Mrs W. detached us two together, passing Southease Church. She asked me about my novel, & I supplied her with a carefully arranged plot. I wished, so at least I said, to discover what aims drive people on, & whether these are illusory or not. She promptly ~~then~~ quoted: "Two aims have governed my life; one is the passion for ~~scientific~~ investigation by scientific means; the other the passion for producing a certain good state of society by those investigations." Somehow she proceeded to warn me against the dissipation of energy in

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emotional friendship. One should have only one great personal relationship in one's life, she said; ~~par~~ or at most two – marriage & parenthood. Marriage was necessary as a waste pipe for emotion, as security in old age when personal attractiveness fails, & as as a help to work. We were entangled at the gates of the level crossing when she remarked, "Yes, I daresay an old family servant would do as well." On the way up the hill she stated her position that one should wish well to all the world, but discriminate no one. According to her the differences are not great; the defects invariable; one must cultivate impersonality above all things. In old age people become of little account, she said; one speculates chiefly upon the possibility, or the impossibility of a future life. This grey view depressed me more & more; partly I suppose from the egotistical sense of my own nothingness in her field of vision. And then we wound up with a light political gossip & chatter of reminiscences, in which Mr & Mrs Webb did their parts equally. & so to bed; & to my horror, in came Mrs. W. early next morning to say Good bye, & perched in all her long impersonality on the edge of my bed, looking past my stockings drawers & ~~H~~ po. This has taken so long to write that we are now arrived at Monday 23rd Sept., &

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Monday 23rd Sept.

So many things have accumulated, that I can hardly proceed to that masterly summing up of the Webbs which I intended. I intended in particular to dwell upon the half cursing half humorously cynical view which steals into one's description of the Webbs. I had meant to point out the good qualities ~~points~~ which come from such well kept brisk intellectual habits; how open minded they showed themselves; how completely & consistently sensible. That, I think deserves a line under it. Good sense seems to me their invariable characteristic. How sensible it was, not to fuss about goodbye, or a Collins. how sensibly they approach every question whether of servants or politics, putting their minds at your service without the least ostentation or flummery. Their horizon is entirely clear, unless, in the case of Mrs Webb, as the medium said, a cloud of dust surrounds them; they have no illusions; they survey the whole panorama, which is amazingly clear to them, stoically, both for the race & for themselves as individuals. Sidney is the warmer & more human of the two, & one could even commit the impropriety of liking him personally which one can hardly do in the case of Mrs Webb. How stoically ~~he~~ with his perpetual little smile, he remarked that they are now 60, & therefore may expect a stroke within the next 5 years; but if he could arrange things with the divine messenger, he would compound somehow to die precisely at the same moment with "my wife."

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By rights Lottie should have a whole chapter to herself at this point; but to live through these things is unpleasant enough without reviving them here. At this moment owing to what the overhead L. says tone before breakfast, I am uncertain whether we have 2 servants or not, & to tell the truth, completely indifferent, such is the relief of being without them for a fortnight. Considering their unimportance they must be compared to flies in the eye for the discomfort they can produce in spite of being so small. But let us change the subject. I went over to Charleston last Tuesday & was shown his shells by Quentin; sat with Nessa & laid bare my sorrows, which she can more than match; & then Clive & Mary arrived in a motor car fr. pa— so many were their parcels & bags; & indeed Mary produced chocolates, cakes & sweets in abundance. I'm ashamed to say that that is my chief impression, but I left soon after, & they promised to spend a night here, so that I left unsaid & unasked all my ideas & questions. She was, as usual, mute as a trout — I say trout because of her spotted dress — also because, though silent, she has the swift composure of a fish. I walked home shoving my bicycle, too badly punctured to ride. Well then the Times began to shower books upon me, & I was reduced at one point to writing my review in the afternoon, nor can I discover any reason why one's brains should be unavailable between 3 & 5. When the telegraph girl rode up with

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a telegram from Clive to put us off, owing to some disease of Mary's, we were both immensely relieved, & I threw down my pen, as they say, & ate a large tea, & found my load of writing much lessened. When I have to review at command of a telegram, & Mr Geal has to ride off in a shower to fetch the book at Glynde, & comes & taps at the window about 10 at night to receive his shilling & hand in the parcel, I feel pressed & important & even excited a little. For a wonder, the book, Hudson, was worth reading. Then on Saturday we went to Lewes by train & bought a two handled saw, & fish, & [illegible], & then met Gerbler at the station & came out here.

Whether our exclamations on parting from our guests are good evidence, I don't know, but on this occasion we both cried "Good God, what an Egoist!" We have been talking about Gerbler to Gerbler for some 30 hours; it is like putting a microscope to your eye. One molehill is wonderfully clear; the surrounding world ceases to exist. But he is a forcible young man; of limited, able & respectable within those limits; as hard as a cricket ball; & as tightly rounded & stuffed in at the edges. We discussed — well, it always came back to be Gerbler.. "I have a very peculiar character... I am not like any other artist... My picture would not have those blank spaces... I don't see that, because in

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my case I have a sense which other people don't have. . . .
I saw in a moment what she had never dreamt of seeing" . . .
& so on. And if you do slip a little away, he watches
very jealously, ~~& brings~~ from his own point of view,
& somehow tricks you ~~began~~ back again. He has an
insatiable vanity. I suspect the truth to be that he
is very anxious for the good opinion of people like ourselves,
& would immensely like to be thought well of by
Duncan, Vanessa & Roger. His triumphs have been too
cheap so far. However this is honestly outspoken, &
as I say, he has power & intelligence, & will, one
sees, paint good interesting pictures, though some
rupture of the brain would have to take place before
he could be a painter.

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Wed. 2nd October.

No, I cant write to Margaret Davies. I spent on her the first flush of ideas after tea — It is fatal not to write the things one wants to write at the moment of wanting to write it. Never thwart a natural process. I had so much to say here too. First, how the weather has changed, & we are on the verge of winter. Our clocks were put back on Sunday night; simultaneously I went into thick clothes; the sun lost half its heat; the nights became bitterly cold; we began to burn wood before tea; to dine by lamplight; & to shiver without fur coats on our beds. But the impulse that was to unite & fashion & give sequence to my head full of ideas perished on the ill suited page to Margaret Davies.

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Monday, Oct. 7th.

I infinitely regret my generous impulse to write a letter describing the Webbs to Margaret; that evening my mind was full of ideas; & Asheham deserves some richer farewell than I am able to give it, disturbed as I am by the briskness of home coming & a little agitated by the servant problem that I have to face tomorrow. I am inclined to dwell upon the warmth & beauty of this room & I have bought another glass jar for 2/- These things are in the foreground. It is partly due to them & partly to the dampness of the Harmsworth press that I dont write first & foremost of the German offer of peace. Certainly it made our hearts jump at Asheham this morning. But as the Times insists upon minimising it, not much exhilaration remains. We came up by East Grinstead to avoid the crowd, & a long journey therefore, stopping at all the dullest places in Sussex— West Hoathly among others. We lunched at Valcheras, & then looked into the lowest pit of human nature; saw flesh still unmoulded to the shape of humanity— whether it is the act of eating & drinking that degrades, or whether people who lunch at restaurants are naturally degraded, certainly one can hardly face one's own humanity afterwards.

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Saturday Oct: 12th.

The first week in London is always one of the richest, & the rich weeks always tend to pass unrecorded. I have my anniversary to ~~cel~~ celebrate also; this diary is one year old, & looking back I see how exactly one repeats one's doings. For example this ~~Stan~~ week we went to buy an overcoat for L: last year we bought boots. Again there was the question of a party; ~~for~~ again what I may euphemistically call an 'argument'. Nessa was in London too; & I dined with her & Clive, only there was Duncan too,—we dined at Gordon Square. But Lord Grey's meeting has no counterpart last year; nor could I possibly have written then, as I can now write that tomorrow mornings paper may bring news of an armistice. Possibly the fighting will be over this time next week. Whatever we have done this week has had this extraordinary back ground of hope; a tremendously enlarged version of the feeling I can remember as a child as Christmas approached. The Northcliffe papers do all they can to insist upon the indispensability & delight of war. They magnify our victories to make our mouths water for more; they shout with joy when the Germans sink the Irish mail; but they do also show some signs of apprehension ~~as to the~~ that Wilson's terms may be accepted. L: has just come in from Staines with a paper which says, with obvious gloom, that the rumour is that Germany ~~has a~~ agrees to evacuation. As she is not, of course, they add, to be allowed to make any sort of terms. Meanwhile Philip is in the thick of it,

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& Maurice Davies' son has been killed.

Grey's making was impressive as matters go, which is not saying very much of course; but it does amount to saying that Grey himself struck me as a solid straightforward English Squire, curiously like Uncle Herbert magnified, in appearance, & with the kind of open air honour & sagacity which one feels to some extent in a man like Waller. He said nothing but what one has read & agreed with about the League of Nations, but he said it simply; & for a 'great statesman' to have shown a human feeling & no bombast does produce an odd sense of wonder & humility in me, as if human nature were worth something after all. I don't extend my charity to Lord Harcourt however, who sat in front of us, or to Mrs Asquith & Elizabeth; they were in no way venerable or even striking; but one sees that Mrs A: has triumphed by virtue of a whip cord vitality; she is as tense as a stretched bow; as lean & wiry as a whippet; as vibrating like a fiddle; but not a trace (I'm judging by my view of her profile) of anything more profound or interesting, & as for poor pasty Elizabeth ~~A.~~ behind she seemed to have come straight from Marshall & Snelgrove's millinery counter. There was an enormous audience, & as we left people were passing about the rumour that the Kaiser had abdicated.

I went on to my dinner at Gordon Square; thence to the Coliseum with Nessa, where we had to sit out an infinite length of Miss Clarice Mayne. after which we saw our ballet — Sche— (I cant achieve either the spelling or the speaking of it) which isn't one of the best, & when I saw it I remembered it better done at ~~Drury~~ Covent Garden. Maynard who has the generosity

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& something of the manner now of an oriental prince, had
hired a brougham for Nessa — an infinitely small, slow
antiquated carriage drawn by a very lengthy stables looking
quadruped. Roger, Duncan Maynard, Nessa & I all crammed in
& ~~[illegible]~~ padded along slowly across London to Chelsea.
Somehow we passed Ottoline, brilliantly painted, as garish as a
strumpet, displayed in the midst of omnibuses under an
arc lamp; & she reappeared in the Sitwells drawing room.
I had made acquaintance with the two Sitwell brothers
the day before, & been invited to the party. That very
morning a review by me of Edith Sitwells poems had
appeared in the Times. It's strange how whole groups of
people suddenly swim ~~read~~ complete into one's life.
This group to which Gertler. Mary H: are attached
was unknown to me a year ago. I surveyed them with
considerable, almost disquieting calm. What is there to be
scared about, or to quarrel over, in a party like this, I
asked myself; & found myself saying the most natural
things to Gertler, who was wearing ~~an~~ evening dress, bought
from the tipsy Mr Dallas, for the first time. We
stood & compared our sensations. Edith Sitwell is a
very tall young woman, wearing a permanently startled
expression, & curiously finished off with a high green
silk headdress, concealing her hair, so that it is not known
whether she has any. Otherwise, I was familiar with
everyone, I think. Nina Hamnett, Mary H, Jack H;
Ottoline, Sheppard, Norton & so forth. I found
myself discoursing to Sheppard about Sophocles. Never
before have I seen him even momentarily serious.
"I think of nothing but Greek plays." he said, &
"And I'm not sure that I don't always
people —

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see people as if they were in Greek plays." I liked him better than before; still I think he found it awkward to stand discussing Sophocles seriously; & so we parted. My complete mastery of evening parties is shown by the indifference with which I am deserted, & the composure with which I decide upon my next choice. I was a good deal impressed by this; & how calmly too, I looked at my watch, & saw it was time to leave, & went out alone, & drove to Sloane Square, not excited, not depressed, but contemplative & introspective.

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Tuesday. Oct. 15th

I did not think I should so soon have to describe a meeting with a Cabinet Minister—though I admit that we seem to be drifting, without much desire on our part, into a circle where the great officials are sometimes to be found. This is the doing of the Review, mainly; but Herbert Fisher's visit wasn't due to the Review; it was very obviously due to old family affection. I was sitting down alone to tea on Sunday, with my odious penny paper to read (the Germans having agreed to evacuate late on Saturday night) L: being gone to Sutton to speak about our colonies & the servants out when the bell rang & I saw several figures against the glass. On opening the door I really couldn't at first collect my wits; there were Olive & Mr Haselbine & Herbert Fisher. The H's. went off, & Herbert came in, as they had arranged beforehand. Was I nervous or proud, or anything but interested & anxious to pick his brains for news? I don't think I felt a moments agitation. For one thing he has lost his lean intellectual look; his hollow cheeks are filled; his eyes with that pale frosty look which blue eyes get in age; his whole bearing very quiet, simple, & when not speaking rather saddened & subdued. The number of deaths in his house caused this perhaps; but I can't help thinking that London life has rid him of his desire to say clever things to undergraduates without stopping all the time. Anyhow we talked without difficulty.

"We've won the war today" he said, at once.

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I saw Milner this morning, & he says we shall have peace by Christmas. The Germans have made up their minds they can't fight a retreat. The General Staff has faced the fact, & they've had what I think the considerable courage to admit it. Of course we can't accept their present terms. Why, that would leave them still the greatest military power in Europe. They could begin again in ten years time. But it rests with the French. Lloyd George is going to Paris on Monday: but they are holding out for the evacuation of Alsace Lorraine as a guarantee. We shall probably demand the disarmament of certain regiments too. But we've won the war."

He then told me how we'd won the war, which was sometime in July & according to him, by taking a tremendous risk, & leaving the English line ~~only~~ held without reserves, & withdrawing all the army to reinforce Foch in his blow which was timed with French precision 10 minutes before the German attack. If it had failed there was nothing between the Germans & the Channel ports. There is now a good prospect of a complete defeat of the German army; Foch says "I have not yet had my battle". Despite the extreme vindictiveness of our press & the French press, Herbert believed that we are going to baulk ~~Foot~~ Foch of his battle, partly because the Germans will accept any terms to avoid it. & Lloyd George has told me again & again that he means to

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be generous to the Germans. "We want a strong Germany," he says. The Kaiser will probably go. O I was a great admirer of the Germans in the beginning. I was educated there. — I've many friends there, but I've lost my belief in them. The proportion of brutes is greater with them than with us. They've been taught to be brutal. But it hasn't paid. Each one of their crimes has turned out badly. No one can face another war. Why in 10 years they could blot out London in by their aeroplanes. ~~There~~ It cost us £1,000 to kill a German at the battle of the Somme; now it costs us £3,000. But the proportion of men who have never been hurt, or even seen anything horrible is very large. Seeley told me the other day that he'd spoken to thousands & thousands of soldiers, & they all wanted the war conditions of life to go on "without those bloody shells." There'll be trouble when they come back. They'll find their old lives too dull. I'm going to educate them, its true; but that won't begin yet — not in my time. I want to reform the Universities next, & then I shall have done. I cant stay in Parliament without office. Very likely I shall go back to Oxford to teach." So we talked on, not altogether like a Mrs Humphry Ward novel. I tried to think it extraordinary but found it difficult — extraordinary, I mean, to be in touch with one who was in the very centre, in the very centre of the very centre, sitting in a little room at Downing St. where, as he said, the wireless messages are racing through from all over the world, a million miles a minute; where you have constantly to settle off hand questions of enormous difficulty & importance —

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the fate of armies does more or less hang upon what two or three elderly gentleman decide. Herbert thinks there are 2 or 3 geniuses in the cabinet (L. George, Balfour, & possibly Winston Churchill – his definition being that they make everything appear different) & a number of mediocrities. Their qualities I suppose are balance & foresight & culture. Importance seems to smooth away surface eccentricities; & give people an appearance of simplicity; they are very courteous; but somehow no longer spontaneous people: the taint of the family butler is in them. But this was more visible when L: came in. Alone with me H: was very friendly & quiet; & gave himself no airs of dignity.

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Friday, Oct 18th

It's quite obvious of course that for some reason perhaps not creditable to me I think H.F. worth many more words than Ka say, or Saxon both of whom have dined here since. My theory is that for some reason the human mind is always seeking what it conceives to be the centre of things; sometimes one may call it reality, again truth, again life — I dont know what I call it; but I distinctly visualise it as a possession rather more in H.F's hands than in other peoples. For the moment he makes all the rest of the world's activities appear as ramifications radiating from him. But this is roughly stated — Old Ka anyhow is not in the knot in the ~~web~~ middle of the web. She came alone, Will having hurt his knee; & ~~ka~~ not being there in the flesh, one didnt trace him in the spirit. She seemed unchanged; but I think decidedly happier, a little defiant on Will's behalf. The poor little gentle, weakly creature is stated to be wild & queer & his action in giving up his patrimony & refusing to go to Balliol is brought forward as proof. For myself I distrust young men who return to nature on the Wiltshire downs, paint pictures of the sky only, & want, I own though that I'm more than anything to fly. I own though that judging from my ancient view of him at Fitzroy Sqre, Saxon we assume, has found complete consolation in Mrs Stagg & a new set of gold teeth. We have never seen him so sprightly bold & communicative. He is already talking of his next visit to Bayreuth ~~why~~. He did not knit Barbara's child's drawers; & only showed a slight asperity when Nick was mentioned. But I write hurriedly, giving no account of the Albert Museum, nor your

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suspension over whatever the papers calls 'the precipice of peace', since I must read a little about Voltaire before going up to hear a Promenade Concert at the ~~Albert~~ Queens Hall. The truth is that nothing much more definite is yet known about peace. Wilsons second note came out on Tuesday, in which he used the word 'peradventure'; so far the Germans have not answered. But the Retreat goes on, & last night, beautiful, cloudless, still & moonlit, was to my thinking the first of peace, since one went to bed fairly positive that never again in all our lives need we dread the moonlight.

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Wednesday 23rd Oct

I went up to the Concert, & heard the ghosts of lovely things, since the substance somehow escaped me; partly owing to my mood, partly to the usual vulgarity of Wood. Even so the ghosts of two Bach pieces (one for a duet of violins) were exquisitely lovely. Edith Sichel, whose entire soul is now open to me through her letters, makes me determine to write descriptions neither of pictures nor of music. She makes me consider that the gulf which we crossed between Kensington & Bloomsbury was the gulf between respectable mummified humbug & life crude & impertinent perhaps, but living. The breath of South Kensington lives in her pages — almost entirely, I believe, because they would not mention either copulation or w.c's. However this brings me to our dinner with the MacCarthys, when I borrowed the book. The book has a sort of fascination for me. I see the outside of that world so clearly, & take a kind of ribald pleasure in putting them figures into admi- sending them slumming, to Popes, to the National Gallery, always full of high thoughts, morality kindliness, & never seeing beyond High St Kensington. Molly, thanks to Bloomsbury, has escaped the Ritchie touch. Her book is anyhow giving her some exquisite pleasure, & pain too. Her head, so Desmond said, shrank to the size of an apple; & is now swelling to normal again. They were both in the best spirits — extraordinary if you consider that they were in their own house, & no wine allowed. They gave us an excellent meat dinner; D. has some hopes that if Turkey makes peace he will be discharged, & will then take to wandering & writing more articles.

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Thursday Oct. 24th.

The degradation of steel pens is such that after doing my best
to clip a file one into shape, I have to take to a Waterman,
profoundly though I distrust them, & disbelieve in their
capacity to convey the nobler & profounder thoughts.
Yes, I can speak of myself with more confidence today as
noble & profound: I am capable of standing for Parliament &
holding office. & becoming just like Herbert Fisher perhaps.
To me the vote was as surprising as to some retired
cleric in the vales of Westmorland, who will see in it the
death knell of liberty, I daresay, & preach a sermon to that
effect next Sunday. Then the great lady at Stocks must be
feeling uncomfortable, though I am malicious enough to
suppose that if by some process of selection she alone could
represent Belgravia in the House of Lords, the change would
not ~~be~~ seem so devastating. Imagine her neatly accoutred in
black trousers (so my imagination sees her) upon the bench at
the Hague Conference! Her book, the reviews say, lays
emphasis upon the ~~fact~~ fact that her ~~books~~ novels were once
thought beauties. — today being a holiday.
We are just in from Kingston, & printing not started.
L. not going up to London, & when we caught
McDermott is generally invisible, & when we caught, I may
him was just going out "partly in your interests, as to the
say"; & threw out ominous hints as to the seven pound,
decline of his business, which threatens our — to the superior fluency —
so my imagine (back again to the superior fluency walked
cogency of steel) However, having walked his
across Bushy Park, & heard a stag grating
throat in a very surly manner, his does being
couchant by his side, we took tram to Kingston
& there heard the paper boys shouting out about the
Presidents message, which we bought & devoured in the

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The main points are that he is keeping negotiations going, though the Times came out with a great headline "No parley" this morning. He discriminates too, between the German people & the Kaiser; he will consider an armistice with the one but only complete surrender with the other. Anyhow the question is now laid before England & France; & so another step in the tedious business is begun. Privately our minds are exercised about the question of going to Tidmarsh on Sunday. Lytton wired to beg us to yesterday, ~~stating himself to be~~ saying it "a desolation extreme". The difficulties are the necessary of morning's work to be done; Herbert & his Freda dining here on ~~Sat~~ Sunday. Yes, Herbert has been accepted by a certain Miss Freda Major — who she is or what she is, except that she is reported very active, I do not know.

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Saturday Oct. 26th.

Here I am experimenting with the parent of all pens — the black J. the pen, as I used to think it, along with other objects, as a child, because mother used it; & therefore all other pens were varieties & eccentricities. What I have to record with it is the cheerful news that I am once more (see p. — for the last occasion) in hot water — this time owing to Gertler — Monty Shearman — Mary — Clive — Vanessa; — who exploded upon my head with reproaches for having almost brought her to disaster. My conscience is clear, but I'm coming to think that friendships maintained in this atmosphere are altogether too sharp, brittle, & painful. I have written to Charleston to this effect. If I could have letters from Mary & Clive I should feel myself rewarded. L: is down at Tidmarsh, & I write to relieve myself of the feeling which comes over me in his absence of being a beleaguered city. We had a day in London yesterday — somehow the charm of those days is not quite what it was. Am I getting blasé — is the 17 Club less enthralling? We went to the Omega show, met Roger, were invited to tea at his studio, discussed the change in Duncan's style, his fathers burial, half Church of England, half Quaker, representation, reality, & so on again, Waley coming in as we left. We dined at a very hot place in Soho, where you have perhaps a stone's weight of food given you for 2/3. On again to the Club, where Leonard made his speech about Austria Hungary. As usual I find him, not only very clear but with the right degree of passion to be interesting. The audience, as usual at the 17 Club seemed made of ~~curious~~ curiosities whose aberrations of feature had driven them up up the backwaters of life, where they dwell in semi obscurity, only issuing from their huts to plant arrows in the sides of the sleek town dwellers. Yet weren't so ugly, & might be picturesque. Or is it merely that the body resents much use of the brain?

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Monday, 28th October.

L. found Lytton with a swollen finger & 2 or 3 spots on his hand sitting over the fire, & only moving when enveloped in a silk tablecloth, & wrapping his hand also in silk handkerchiefs ~~the~~ & complaining ~~on~~ of the cold, & describing nights of agony when a pain like toothache seizes upon him & develops into frantic agonies only to be allayed by morphia. This has been going on for a month & Carrington is at her wits end, very naturally. Anything like pain is abhorrent to all Stracheys, but making all allowances for the exaggerations & terrors of the poor creature, he has had a sufficient dose of horror, I imagine. & the doctor privately warns Carrington that shingles may last months. However, Lytton is probably moving in to Mary in a day or two, avoiding London, because of the influenza— (we are, by the way, in the midst of a plague ~~match~~ unmatched since the Black Death, according to the Times, who seem to tremble lest it may seize upon Lord Northcliffe, & thus precipitate us into peace) But I am far from peace. A fortnight ago all Bloomsbury rang with my crimes: M.H: was conveyed about London in a fainting condition in taxi-cabs; Lytton was appealed to ~~to~~ come to her rescue; Duncan Clive Vanessa — all were in agonies & desperations. Why no one charged me with it then, I don't know: my private theory is that Clive inspired V's letter ~~hearing agony~~ ~~in their agony~~ ~~on~~ as a precaution against further indiscretions, giving strict orders that his name should not be mentioned. I soothed myself by denouncing the spy system, & now am quite unable even to feel irritated. It all comes, so I think;

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from the indiscreet way in which people like M. H. accept positions which they are unable to fill, & then flinching & shying constantly keep everybody in a state of discomfort. I announce my intention to keep clear of that set in future; & as I write this, the post brings a letter from Eliot asking to come & see us. To my great surprise a voice upon the telephone developed into the voice of Lady Mary Murray; asking us to lunch yesterday. We ~~put~~ changed lunch to tea & went off to Mores Gardens, a block of flats on the Embankment, where ~~we~~ after ringing for some time, a gigantic knock was answered by Lady Mary in person. L: was half inclined to think her an untidy but cordial housemaid. The Fisher Williams' were there. A tea party is the least natural of situations, & produces the utmost amount of discomfort I think. Then the F. W's possessed only the brain of one moderate sized rabbit between them. Still it was not the respectability that weighed me down, not the absence of intellect. There are certain dun coloured misty days in autumn, which remind me of the Murrays atmosphere. The cleanliness of Gilbert was remarkable; a great nurse must rub him smooth with pumice stone every morning; & he is so discreet, so sensitive, so low in tone & immaculate in taste that you hardly understand how he has the boldness to beget children. She is a wispy, elderly lady, highly nervous, a little off hand & much of an aristocrat in her dashing method, kindly, fussy, refined too — O yes, they are all refined. I sat in

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talked to Gilbert first about our love of sweets, then about the Greek love of wine, then about his standing with the Government. He has, he says, refused many honours, but was reprimanded for sending a review of a book on Job to America. Maliciously enough, I felt that his simplicity was maintained in the face of years of worship & adulation, & that the proper thing to say is "How wonderfully simple dear Gilbert Murray is!" But his niceness was unmeasured. The Toynbees came in. I had a long rigmarole with Arnold about his office & his learning & so forth; I think I frighten him; & perhaps I'm not used to the Oxford manner. Its suavity & politeness are strange to me. He is so short sighted that he has a painful look of peakness round the eyes, as if he were a grammar school boy exalted by the most assiduous industry to positions above his station. I'm always surprised to find how well meaning & even outspoken he is in spite of this.

Home to find Freda Mayor marooned at the station, so that L: had to fetch her. Herbert came after a field day; he'd been out since 6. & took F. home, & caught the last train to Staines. Freda is merely a toy dog enveloped in human flesh, but retaining the pretty plaintive, rather peevish ways of her canine existence. She has stimulated Herbert to talk with greater fluency & enthusiasm than usual about the policeman strike & Fords motor cars.

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Wednesday Oct: 30th

Just in from a walk in the Park on this incredibly lovely autumn day. Various houses have orange berries growing upon them; the beech trees are so bright that everything looks pale after you have looked at them. (how I dislike writing directly after reading Mrs H. Ward! — she is as great a ~~mean~~ menace to health of mind as influenza to the body.) We talked of peace; how the sausage balloons will be hauled down, & gold coins dribble in; & how people will soon forget all about the war & the fruits of our victory will grow as dusty as [illegible] ornaments under glass cases in lodging house drawing rooms. How often will the good people of Richmond rejoice to think that liberty has been won for the good people of Potsdam? I can believe though that we shall be more arrogant about our own virtues. The Times still talks of the possibility of another season, in order to carry the war into Germany, & there imprint a respect for liberty in the German peasants. I think the distance of the average person from feeling of this sort is the only safeguard & assurance that we shall settle down again neither better nor worse.

We had a day in London yesterday; ending for me in talk with Ka & James at the Club, which now renews its life apparently. Ka has ceased to be a bureaucrat owing to Will's illness; shed power as a chestnut its husk; & remains untouched within. James just back from Cornwall, where he had the influenza. Alix back too, without having the influenza, & ready, I suppose, to begin her autumn campaign, which Oliver bets that she will win. I here note that I bought my new battery on Tues. Oct. 29th; so far of extreme brilliance.

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Sunday, November 3rd.

On Friday night I went up to dine with the Arnold-Forbes, partly I own, to avoid Mr Seymour Cox's lecture upon the Secret Treaties, since I thought I knew already what Mr Seymour Cocks would say. Ka & Will live just past the Spectator office in the little semicircle of houses standing off the road, but tolerably noisy nevertheless. Here he lived before his marriage. He looked unusually small, drawn & pallid, like a face seen under a gas lamp, owing to his disease; & no longer young. He reminds me rather of one of those old ladies, who have yellow hair & very pink cheeks, but you can count their years in the way the flesh is drawn tight across the bone, & crinkled with very delicate fine lines. His person & manners are against him. He makes an impression of being very sharp, rather fretful, & ~~nev~~ acid. I think all this is largely due to his peevish voice, & little angular body, which he jerks about when he gets excited, & very little makes him emphatic. Nor did I like the pale acid decorations of the room — the lavender walls, & the one white rose drooping against them; nor did I like his niggled & emotional picture of the downs. There seemed a lack of warmth, depth, & substance. Perhaps none of this very much matters. His principles are those of the modern husband — freedom & independence for the wife — equal pleasures. Principles matter too. Ka will be happy with him. We talked very briskly. I don't think I should like his taste in books; I don't like his slang; or his admirations; but I liked his excitement over the war office gazette. I suspect he has an able excitable rather febrile mind, which, on principle, has taken to painting pictures; I could wager my own head full of

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brains that he'll never paint a good one.

On Saturday, we had one of our Hampstead afternoons, & went to Margaret, & to Janet. I've done the same thing so often. I've found her in that green distempered room, with the ugly pictures. How well I know the benevolent look of the late Mr Case as a young man, drawn upon yellow paper & very slightly tinted on the cheeks, larger than life, framed in gold, by the late Mr Richmond. I know the photographs of young soldiers, & the silhouettes, & Janet's books, which never seem to be read, & the Greek dictionary with the piece of paper sticking out of it. Then there's Diana who takes up a lot of attention; but is now a reformed character. Emphie regulates us in & out of the room. Tea is prepared. Janet questioned about butter & pressed to eat more of everything. Yesterday Emphie had a new kind of methylated spirits to show me, which you can only get in Highgate. Mr Marshall rather varied the proceedings—a well kept middle aged gentleman of Hampstead who proclaimed his wish to see it rule the world; & his fear lest America should rule it instead. Here was a Times leading article in the flesh. But he was also a chatty old gossip; & he & Emphie had noticed so many houses built, newcomers who were almost unknown, trees that wanted lopping, motor cars waiting for Mr Galsworthy, & preparations for opening the Y.M.C.A., that it was like Cranford to listen. And then they went & Janet talked to me about literature, & I fell into a passing gloom. She says that a great many novels are written, & it seems fairly evident that none are "immortal". I suppose I referred this to my own novels; indeed, she urged me to write a biography for Basil Williams. But I fancy that what depressed me was not only

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the personal question, but the smell of musty morality. None of us came up to the scratch – not Lytton or Forster or anyone: but I felt beyond this fairly safe criticism the depressing effect of talking to some one who seems to want all literature to go into the pulpit: who makes it all insensibly worthy & safe & respectable. I was led into trying to define my own particular search – not after morality, or beauty or reality – no; but after literature itself; & this made Janet a little anxious & insistent, as if, conceivably, she might have missed something. Where did I find it? How did I explain it? We agreed upon a certain passage in Sophocles; but as she capped this with one in Lear, I think we were talking of different things. And she pressed me to tell her what I meant; & of course I came nowhere near it, & at length she said that she thought she was beginning to find what I meant – after ~~all~~ these years of reading Greek! I was depressed at her age, at something unstable about her; but I was also depressed at the implied criticism of The Voyage Out, & ~~at~~ at the hint that I had better turn to something other than fiction. Now this seems to me foolish. I wish I could make up a cure for it, to be taken after such encounters, which are bound to happen every month of one's life. It's the curse of a writers life to want praise so much, & be so cast down by blame, or indifference. The only sensible course is to ~~for~~ to remember that writing is after all what one does best; that any other work would seem to me a waste of life; that on the whole I get infinite pleasure from it; that I make one hundred pounds a year; & that some people like what I write. But Janet would only admit that love counted, & said that her friends had ~~cr~~ succeeded only in ~~creating~~ "coming off" in life, not in art.

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Monday 4th Nov.

Since I'm back from the Club & waiting for L. (who has gone to see Mr Hawkins of the Temple) I had better assuage my fretfulness with pen & ink. I have a pen of inelegante ~~malachite~~ (?) which perhaps serves the purpose of a babies coral. I've had no letter from Charleston which makes me feel rather sent to Coventry, though I suppose communications are going on between Clive & Mary; & then I can't help fancying that Janets chill falling upon the last pages of my novel still depresses me. The depression however now takes the wholesome form of feeling perfectly certain that nothing I can do matters, so that one is both content & irresponsible — I'm not sure that this isn't a happier state than the exalted state of the newly ~~of~~ praised. At least one has nothing to fear. & the sheer pleasure of writing seems singularly unalloyed. It proves itself so genuine that no amount of Hampstead cold water can impair it. Praise? fame? & Janets good opinion? How beside the mark they all are! ~~Compared with the~~ I keep thinking of different ways to manage my scenes; conceiving endless possibilities; seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed by me into its equivalent of language. (Lotties fire has to be nursed like a dying kitten — its my fire now, hers being dead of course, & I've taken 25 minutes to get a trickle of flame between the coals) In the intervals I've been thinking a good deal about this melancholy state of impending age. From the way Janet took certain remarks of mine about 60 as an age limit (for the Webbs) I ~~had~~ felt ~~as if the~~ ~~felt~~ age to be a shameful disease that one shrank from hearing named. At anyrate, it is obvious that she must think about it privately. And then it seems not facing it, turning away from it.

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as if she were now always playing for safety. She has a kind of personal resentment against anyone, like Lytton for example, who laughs at what she holds sacred; she falls into the insidious trap of believing that any departure from the great is ephemeral & impertinent; & she argues this with personal feeling as if her own reputation depended on theirs. And all the time she's so anxious to be in the front, to share what the ~~one~~ young feel; But if I represent the young, my feelings tend to develop on such different lines that I can only wave my hand over leagues of sea.

To Sotherans; Mudies & the Club.

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Saturday, ~~the~~ Nov: 9th.

Lord Mayor's day among other things, & one of the two last of war, I suppose. It's just possible that Lottie may bring in news that the armistice is signed within an hour. People buy papers at a great rate; but except for an occasional bag round a newspaper bag & a number of shop girls provided with the Evening News in the train one feels nothing different in the atmosphere. The general state perhaps is one of dozed surfeit; here we've had one great relief after another; you hear the paper boys calling out that Turkey has surrendered or Austria given up, & the mind doesn't do very much with it; was the whole thing too remote & meaningless to come home to one either in action or in ceasing to act? Katherine Murry, whom I saw on Wednesday, inclines to think that most people have grasped neither war nor peace. Two or three weeks ago I heard a citizen holding forth to a lady in the train. who asked him whether he thought there would be peace. "I hope not.. We're giving them everything they want & getting nothing." Since then it is difficult to see how the most bloodthirsty citizens can squeeze anything more out of Germany. The Kaiser still wears a phantom kind of crown. Otherwise there is revolution, & a kind of partial awakenment one fancies, on the part of the people to the unreality of the whole affair. Suppose we wake up too?

We began to set up Kew Gardens this week — Thursday was the first day yet, I think. Macdermott has surrendered his 2/: after a little ineffective shuffling. On Wednesday I went up to Hampstead; found the tall ugly villa looking

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over the valley, where the Murrys live. Katherine was up, but lurking & feeble, crawling about the room, like an old woman. How far she is ill, one cant say. She impresses one a little unfavourably at first— then more favourably. I think she has a kind of childlikeness somewhere which has been much disfigured, but still exists. Illness, she said, breaks down one's privacy so that one can't write— The long story she has written breathes nothing but hate. Murry & the Monster watch & wait on her, till she hates them both; she trusts no one; she find no 'reality'

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Monday. Nov. 11th.

Twentyfive minutes ago the guns went off, announcing peace. A siren hooted on the river. They are hooting still. A few people ran to look out of windows. The rooks wheeled round, & wore for a moment, that the symbolic look of creatures performing some ceremony, partly of thanksgiving, partly of valediction over the grave. A very cloudy still day, the smoke toppling over heavily towards the east; & that too wearing for a moment a look of something floating, waving, & drooping. We looked out of the window; saw the housepainter give one look at the sky & go on with his job; the old man toddling along the street carrying a bag out which a large loaf protruded, closely followed by his mongrel dog. So far neither bells nor flags, but the wailing of sirens & intermittent guns.

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Tuesday 12th Nov.

We should have done well, I think, to be satisfied with that aspect of peace; how the rooks flew slowly in circles, & the smoke drooped; but I had to go to Harrison, & I think we were both conscious of a restlessness which made it seem natural to be going up to London. Disillusionment began after 10 minutes in the train. A fat slovenly woman in black velvet & feathers with the bad teeth of the poor insisted upon shaking hands with two soldiers; "Its thanks to you boys we are" She was half drunk already, & soon produced a large bottle of beer which she made them drink of; & then she kissed them, & the last we saw of her was as she ran alongside the train waving her hand to the two stolid soldiers. But she & her like possessed London, & alone celebrated peace in this sordid way, staggering up the muddy pavements in the rain decked with flags, & volubly sentimental at sight of other peoples flags. The Heavens disapproved & did their utmost to extinguish, but only succeeded in making feathers flop & flags languish. Taxicabs were crowded with whole families, grandmothers & babies, showing off; & yet there was no centre, no form for all this wandering emotion to take. The crowd had nowhere to go, nothing to do; they were in the state of children with too long a holiday. Perhaps the respectable suppressed what joy they felt; there seemed to be no mean between tipsy ribaldry & a rather sour disapproval. Besides the discomfort tried every ones' temper. It took us from 4 to 6 to get home; standing in queues, every one wet, many shops shut, no light yet procurable, & in everyone's mind the same restlessness & inability to settle down, & yet discontent with whatever it was possible to do.